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STATE FOR AF/W, INR/AA
DOE FOR GEORGE PERSON

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TAGS: PGOV NI
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: GOVERNMENT FORMS NIGER DELTA TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

REF: LAGOS 344

Classified By: Acting PolCouns Geoff Martineau for reasons 1.4. (b & d)

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¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The GON continues to feel its way forward in developing a coherent policy toward development of the Niger Delta and resolution of the conflict there. Two months after the resignation of Ibrahim Gambari as Chairman of the Steering Committee of the long-awaited Niger Delta Summit, an event which President Yar'Adua had originally promised would take place within 100 days of taking office, the GON has announced it has formed a 45-member Technical Committee charged with the modest goal of reviewing previous reports and recommendations on the matter. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) On September 4, the GON announced the formation of the 45-member Technical Committee on the Niger Delta. Inaugurated on September 8 by Vice President Goodluck Jonathan in a closed door ceremony, its mandate is to review the various reports on the region already issued by previous government commissions dating back to 1958, and submit its first recommendations within 10 days. Coming on the heels of the collapse of the GON's latest efforts to convene a comprehensive Niger Delta Summit, it is a more modest effort at both developing a feasible way forward to end the crisis and bolstering the GON's damaged credibility among Niger Delta stakeholders.

¶3. (S/NF) According to press reports, members of the Technical Committee include:

Ledum Mitee: Chairman of the Committee, Mitee is the President of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, a lawyer, and was in the late Ogoni activist Ken Saro-Wiwa's inner circle. Per reftel, Mitee has also been considered in some circles as a possible chairman for the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC).

Nkoyo Toyo: Secretary of the Committee, Toyo is a lawyer and women's rights activist, and is the Executive Director of Gender and Development Action, a civil rights NGO. She is also a member of the People's Democratic Party.

Kalu Idika Kalu: Originally named as a possible chairman of the Committee, Kalu is an Igbo from Abia State and was former

Minister of Finance in both Abacha's and Babangida's regimes.

He has also worked for the World Bank and was a presidential candidate of the National Democratic Party. While having superior executive and international experience relative to some other Committee members, some observers say that he will have a difficult time working on a committee that he does not lead, and may not work well with some specific fellow members. (Note: Department reporting from the mid-1990s mentioned a "James Ibori" as accompanying Kalu on two separate visits to Washington, D.C.; Post has not been able to substantiate that this is the same person as the former governor of Delta State from 1999-2007. End note.)

Sam Amadi: Harvard-trained lawyer and former Special Assistant to Foreign Minister Ojo Maduekwe. He was also Special Advisor on Legal Matters to former Senate President Ken Nnamani.

Anthony Ani: Former Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and former Minister of Finance under the Abacha regime, some observers view him as ethically compromised.

Edor Obi: A native of Cross River State, Obi is a retired Colonel and former military administrator of Rivers State.

Omofume Onoge: An academic and advocate of responsible derivation and resource control.

1B. I. C. Ijeoma: An academic and advocate of Niger Delta development.

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Sam Amuka-Pemu: Publisher of Vanguard Newspaper.

Stella Omu: Former Senator from 1999-2003 who served as Chief Whip.

Julius Ihonvbere: Ihonvbere was former President Obasanjo's Special Advisor on Policy Monitoring and Evaluation.

Timi Alaibe: From Bayelsa State, Alaibe is Managing Director of the NDDC.

14. (SBU) Other members of the Technical Committee are reported to include Nduese Essien, Tony Esu, Magnus Njei Abe, Tonye Princewill, Wole Ohunayo, Olusola Oke, D. I. Kekemeke, Charles Edosomhan, E. C. Adiele, Grace Ekong, Peter King, Anderson Eseimokumo, Lawrence Ek-pebu, Austin Ikein, Youpele Banigo, Ukandi Gabriel Ogar, Isaac Jemide, Abel Dafioghor, Bernard Jamaho, Ben Bouegha, Peter Ebha-lemen, E. M. Umezurike, Godswill Ihetu, Cyril Anyanwu, Chibuzor Ugowoha, Tony Uranta, Anyakwe Nsir-imovu, and Atei Beredugo.

15. (C) COMMENT: While the announcement of the formation of the Committee and its chairman, Ogoni activist Ledium Mitee, has received a guardedly optimistic response from Niger Delta stakeholders, expectations for the new committee remain low. That said, the Committee members are talented and hopefully their work will inform forward movement by the new Niger Delta Ministry. Ambassador has a request in to meet with both the new chairman and secretary in the coming days. END COMMENT.

SANDERS